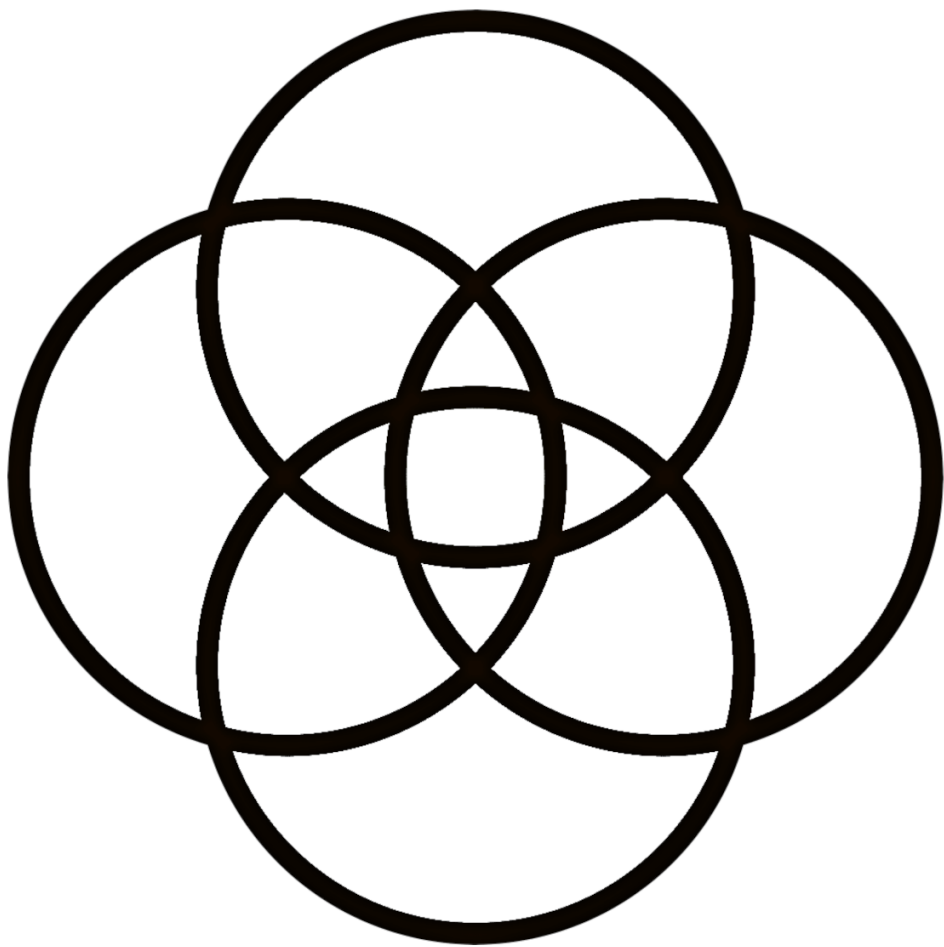


*Plūřalītŷ āņđ
īhāt to đo āboūt it*



*bŷ: Cāsšie, Kāt, āņđ
Ahāŷņ Cāņđlēs*

What does it mean to be plural?

Plurality is an identity label in the same way transness or asexuality is. Simply put, to be plural is to be multiple. Though it can manifest a myriad of ways, most plural folks (or systems) experience multiple separate identities inhabiting one body. Often taking turns at the wheel, often experiencing thought as conversation between parts.

You may know us as Cassie Candles, but we're also Kat Candles, Ahayn Candles, and a dozen or so other Candles' we're still getting to know :)

Mii Căssie



DID, Plural Terms and Opinions

For a long time, this phenomenon was known as Multiple Personality Disorder. Today, most people use the term Dissociative Identity Disorder. The issue with a label like that is that you've just institutionalized a whole way of being. We'll break into that more later, but for now, a term we drastically prefer to DID is Plural.

Plural systems often have many different terms for the various identities that make them up; the most recognizable being 'Alters'. Some systems use 'Headmates', 'Parts', 'Voices'. Any term that is agreed upon is valid. We try to use 'People' as much as we can, though sometimes use 'Parts'. The thing is, when you introduce yourself as an alter to somebody, it's often hard for them to internalize that they're meeting a whole new person when they perceive you as a feature of a strange new condition they've learned about you. Fuck that, we're our own people <3

DID and Cop Logic <3

We're gonna go on a tangent and talk about transness for sec. We promise it ties in later <3

In the seventies, transexuality was classified as a mental disorder. Trans women of the time were only prescribed estrogen if they 'suffered' gender dysphoria. This manifested as proving to doctors how much you hated your genitals and wanted sex reassignment surgery (even if you didn't). Performing hyperfemininity and pretending to be attracted to men like 'real women' were. There is a whole generation of trans folk from this time who had to prove themselves, and many of them wish the same struggle on the younger transfolk of today. We call them and the sect of people who follow their train of thought, 'Transmedicalists'. It's a shame ridden worldview that invalidates those who don't try to squeeze themselves into the enforced binary. A snake that, in an effort to assimilate, eats it's own tail.

Yeah so... How is this relevant?

There's a couple terms we didn't discuss; Traumagenic, and Endogenic (there are other genics, but these are the most relevant to what we have to say). These terms are used to describe how systems of alters become systems of alters.

A Traumagenic System forms when a person (usually a child) experiences a traumatic thing, and copes with it by splitting their consciousness into two or more streams. Often these streams of conscious (alters) are unaware of each other, and protect each other from the full memory of the traumatic occurrence.

An Endogenic System on the other hand, is a system that does not form as a result of trauma.

Two more terms to discuss are Pro-Endo, and Anti-Endo (ahh, maybe you can see where this is going).

You see, over time, transness became known amongst more people. Overall, the shame people felt about it decreased when there was acceptance. When you see more people like you, it's easier to accept yourself and realize that being trans doesn't have to look one way. Did you know trans women are still women even when they're attracted to other women? This sounds silly and obvious, but it's a realization that took a lot of work for society to reach.

Plurality is a bit earlier on the timeline. Not many people know about it, and many pluralfolk are ashamed of their plural nature. They associate the experience with struggle, being misunderstood, isolation. A lot of these people are Anti-Endo, and intentionally invalidate the experiences of plurals who don't seem to suffer. We were on the verge of discovering our plurality once, when a friend told us that it wasn't real because we didn't have blackout amnesia like her and her headmates. we didn't figure it out for almost a year after this

Mii Ahäyñ



We discovered/accepted our plurality after seeing ourselves in the experience of folks online. We then found a specialist who gained our trust before telling us, "Folks who say they are plural on social media are faking it and roleplaying for attention. It's harmful that they do this. Nobody would WANT to be plural"

It's a complex issue though, because whether or not a plural system can only exist as a result of trauma, it's crucial to the progress of all of systems that we validate both traumagenic and endogenic systems. This is because it's often easier to figure out that you are a system than it is to figure out you were a traumatized child. Often, the nature of plurality is that it exists to help one forget the trauma and cope with daily life

So, what do you do with that?

Wait no, actually, let me go off the deep end a little bit before we get into what to do about this. Shit's like gender or sexuality. Plurality and singularity aren't a fucking binary, if I'm being real, I think it's a spectrum and to some degree a construct imposed by society. Growing up we've naturally built up shame over being multiple because people expect consistency from us. At one point there were three or four of us showing up to voice feminization lessons that only one of us wanted. We kept coming away embarrassed that we would show up with a seemingly random amount of retained progress each week, wanting a completely different goal than the previous week (when we were someone else). It was embarrassing, and none of us at the time understood what was going on.

I think experiences like this aren't uncommon, and many systems learn to mask their plurality; hiding it from even themselves.

When you're so used to masking, it can be really hard to tell (or better yet prove) that someone is plural. Alters can share skills and memories and still be completely separate people with their own drives and desires.

Before we thought of it like a spectrum, we used Internal Family Systems lingo to understand ourselves, because we thought we couldn't be plural if we didn't have blackout amnesia.

The thing is, plurality is a framework to understand oneself. While DID is a medically gatekept term, if viewing yourself as plural is helpful, you should do that! You have our permission to, though you didn't need it. For us it ended up being a lot more helpful than IFS.

OK, circling back, like what do you actually do with this?

The most important thing we've found for our progress as a system is to overcome shame. There is a really big stigma against plurals that can only be overcome through awareness and community. These are both things that plurals lack in real life, and that this zine hopes to contribute to. We desperately need to connect with each other in real life and talk about what it means for us to be plural, and listen. For us personally, that's meant writing songs about our plural experience, and using our shows to form community with others like us, but it could look a lot of different ways.

It's also been really helpful for us to learn as much as we can about plural experiences. We've mostly done this online because, until recently we haven't known too many systems in real life. It's better in real life though, because often when you see yourself in someone you don't know online, it's easier to find yourself 'cringing' over the pain of isolation you've had in that experience. This is why we think offline plural community can be so necessary for our collective healing and understanding. After all, who better to have your back when you age regress in public or forget what year it is? X)

This is Mii Cassandra :)

Cassandra isn't really around anymore; her essence is fused across Cassie and Ahayn now, but she was really special to us and we'll always remember her fondly. In 2019, she introduced herself to us, saying that she was us and she was separate. We didn't have a framework to understand at the time, and it contributed to a lot of psychosis, but she was always there comforting us and making us feel safe.



'I wish I was faking this'

We recently heard someone we really respect say this in response to being told they were faking plurality. It took us a minute to figure out why this didn't sit right with us, and then it hit us. Imagine someone telling a trans woman, "you're not a trans woman, you're faking it for attention." And they respond with, "I WISH I was a cis woman but I'm not, so I have to be trans." The desire to not have the struggle. A struggle that taught us to embody something beautiful and deconstruct a lot of harmful ways of thinking. When we learned that you could be trans, it was a solution to so many problems, and we found a way to be seen and accepted as ourselves.

Mii Kät



Similarly, when we figured out we were plural, it meant we finally had an explanation for so many of the experiences that've haunted us. We finally had a tangible way to heal and to understand ourselves. It made so much more sense why our favorite movie changes everytime we were asked, and how a previous host jumped 12 years into the future.

On top of this, I'm so proud that our mind found a way to escape survival mode and build a life for our severed parts to come back into and safely process. Im so proud that we're still able to experience childlike joy and not be ashamed of doing childish things as an adult. One day we'll live in a world that gets it. For now we have each other, and I think that's nice. Plurality is something to be proud of.

a zine about plural
identity, shame,
and healing